1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

DIVING TECHNIQUE

The rights to the Persian Gulf pearl fisheries are jealously guarded by the Arabs, and these rights have been backed up by the British Government for over a hundred years. They are limited to the inhabitants of the Gulf littoral—Arabs and Iranians. Pearl diving in the Persian Gulf is carried on without the use of any professional diving gear; it is "skin diving." The British have prohibited drags, dredges, and compressed air diving suits or helmets, and there is a 30,000 rupee ($9,000) fine for violation of the law.

However, in spite of this protection, foreigners have dived for pearls in the Gulf, and diving equipment has been used. In 1882 a Bombay syndicate sent a steamer, the *Johnstone Castle,* without official permission to the Bahrein banks. After five days the vessel was arrested by a British gunboat; its yield had been only 23 seed pearls.[21] During the pearling season of 1935 some Italians employed by the Qusaibi Brothers, wealthy merchants of Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, used deep-sea diving suits.[22] Presumably these merchants figured themselves exempt from British proclamations, inasmuch as they were Arabian nationals. But nothing more was ever heard of the venture, so it was either not a financial success or else the British brought pressure to bear against the practice. The Arab customs officials of both Saudi Arabia and Bahrein Island have been extremely suspicious of oil company divers, who spend a lot of time under water inspecting pipelines and piers, and they used to watch them through field glasses to see that they never brought up any oysters.

The maximum depth at which the divers work is about 12 fathoms.[23] Sweeps are left projecting overboard athwartships and are lashed to the tholepins and the deck. The divers' lines pass over the sweeps so that they will not become fouled. To get to the bottom a diver puts his foot in a loop of rope tied to a stone or iron weight, releases a slip knot holding the rope to the sweep, and holding onto the rope plummets down. The attendant pulls up the stone as soon as he feels it hit bottom. The diver holds onto

[21] R. O'Shea, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–41.
[22] K. S. Twitchell, *Saudi Arabia* (Princeton, N. J., 1947), p. 26.
[23] A. Villiers, *op. cit.*, p. 374; Hugh Smith, "The Pearl Fisheries of Ceylon," *National Geographic Magazine,* 33 (1912), p. 274; R. O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 137.